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1969/03/03

Authority E.O. 12958
By dp NARA Date 7-11-02

March 3, 1969

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Melvin R. Laird
Secretary of Defense

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger (S)

SUBJECT: Memorandum Enclosing Preliminary Draft of Potential Military Actions re Vietnam

I am very grateful for your memorandum of February 21, 1969 which forwarded the preliminary papers prepared by the Joint Staff on possible actual or feigned military actions which might be undertaken to signal U. S. intent to escalate operations in Vietnam.

The plans are well conceived and the risks involved in their implementation are precisely enumerated. I am somewhat concerned, however, that the "realities" of the current domestic and international environment do not lend themselves to an acceptance of these risks at this time. There may be, however, some less elaborate actions which could be initiated which although more subtle in nature, might be undertaken with reduced risks of news media recognition or domestic turbulence. I have in mind such measures as the selective implementation of indicators which might signal force build-up, increased planning, etc., as manifested by increased military communications, increased aerial reconnaissance, planning conferences or even the staging of amphibious shipping.

Perhaps it would be possible to flesh-out the plans with a spectrum of lower profiled actions of this type which could be implemented with less risk of international and domestic turbulence. I would be most grateful if you would have this excellent effort refined accordingly so that we could jointly discuss the resulting proposals with the President sometime after March 15, 1969. We

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should also be prepared to discuss with the President proposals for accomplishing required interdepartmental coordination while preserving essential maximum security.